

Broadband Advisory Council
May 14, 2026
SC Office of Regulatory Staff
1901 Main Street, Suite 1500
Columbia, SC 29201

Virtual Meeting
Via Microsoft Teams
10:00am – 11:00am

MINUTES

- I. Welcome: Cedric Keitt, SCBBO & Andrew Bateman, ORS
 - a. Cedric:
 - i. The end of a matter is better than the beginning. Patience is better than pride.
 - ii. We will cover the journey: ARPA, BEAD, how things have developed and then open discussion.
 - iii. Thanks to all of you for helping make this a success.
 - b. Andrew:
 - i. We appreciate all of the work you have all put into broadband over the years. This group is a fantastic example of public and private sector coming together to collaborate, coordinate, and cooperate. Thank you for the work you've put into this.
- II. History of BBAC: Tom Allen, Past Chair.
 - a. The Broadband Office has been with ORS since 2021. The enabling proviso established an advisory committee. Jim and Cedric organized a council to inform them of the processes of grants and strategies that the agency and office would take to get broadband out into the rural areas. In 2023, the Digital Equity office transferred to ORS. By then, we began to transition the BBAC to focus more on the Digital Opportunity Office. We wanted to cast a wide net for today's meeting to inform everyone in SC where we stand regarding BB deployment and where funding is being used to serve citizens of SC. A year ago, the Digital Opportunity funding was cancelled. Because of that, we terminated those meetings to not waste anyone's time. There is a statutory requirement for us to hold a BBAC meeting once a year.
- III. Overview of Funded Development: Jim Stritzinger, SCBBO
 - a. A huge amount of money has come through the BB office in the past few years, beginning in June 24, 2020.
 - b. 2020-2024 Broadband Infrastructure Investment: \$456,728,421
 - i. 129 APRA SLFRF & CPF Projects & Paid
 - ii. 83 (64%) Fully Complete
 - c. 2021 Rural Broadband Grant Program (RBGP)- \$30,000,000
 - d. 2021 Proviso 73.6 (CARES ACT II): \$10,000,000

- e. 2022 ARPA SLFRF: \$214,234,345
 - f. 2022 BEAD Planning: \$5,000,000
 - g. 2023 ARPA Capital Projects Fund: \$185,765,655
 - h. 2025 BEAD Infrastructure/Workforce: \$546,535,983
 - i. When we include private sector funding, we are over \$700,000,000 in broadband funding for the state of SC.
- IV. BEAD Deployment: Mike Herzberger, SCBBO
- a. SCBBO- Managed Grants
 - i. Interactive map allows you to see attribute information- award amount, total number of locations to be completed upon completion of project
 - ii. We took all these grant rounds in the table of contents, merged them into one place, and mapped out funded area locations.
 - iii. Underground is much more resilient than aerial
 - iv. Fiber Laid:
 - 1. 7,479 miles of underground
 - a. 64% of total fiber
 - b. If laid flat on globe, this distance would stretch from Columbia, SC to Paris, France.
 - 2. 4,213 miles aerial
 - 3. Total fiber is 11,693 miles, equivalent of distance from Columbia, SC to Perth, Australia
 - b. SC 811 Collaboration
 - i. New Underground Facility Damage Prevention Laws take effect May 22, 2026
 - 1. We plan to offer information sessions. Be on the lookout for these.
 - c. ARPA is sunseting, and BEAD is sunrising.
 - d. BEAD SC:
 - i. When we make investments, we do them at the street address level.
 - 1. 1 BSL could be multiple units- (i.e. Apartment building)
 - 2. The SC BBO is the investor. We make investments and then the companies do the construction.
 - ii. Began with a total of 2,224,501 BSLs Statewide
 - iii. Remaining BSLs:
 - 1. Residential: 16,191
 - 2. Business: 3,946
 - 3. Community Anchor Institutions: 343 (Schools, libraries, community centers, county owned facilities, etc.)
 - 4. Total: 20,480 (less than 1% statewide)
 - 5. \$41,358,389 Potential Awards, 16 Projects (14 Wireline, 2 LEO)
 - a. Once these investments are made, the projects will take anywhere from 2-4 years to complete.

- e. The BEAD program is synonymous with the final baton pass in a relay race for all 50 states.
 - f. SC is number one in the southeast for BEAD, meaning we have the fewest BSLs remaining. We have the equivalent of a five-year head start compared to North Carolina and Georgia.
 - g. BEAD is different from ARPA. ARPA was designed to lift the US Economy out of the Covid Pandemic.
 - i. We did the bulk of the broadband lift with ARPA money.
 - ii. BEAD is a smaller project for SC but is much more complicated.
 - iii. We have been encouraged to include new technology (LEOs).
 - iv. The period of BEAD is 4 years for Wireline and 10 years for LEO.
 - v. There is a huge focus on minimal costs.
 - h. BEAD Location Maps are available on our website
 - i. Expecting to spend around \$41 Million in subawards to complete work
 - j. There is around \$500 Million unallocated in non-deployment. We do not have an update on whether it will be available or if so, how it would be allocated.
 - k. We are very proud of how fiscally responsible we've been, managing the per location cost. We have reduced the per location cost over time. With the final locations, they are the hardest to reach and most expensive.
 - l. South Carolina is the only state where rural residents' access to broadband outperforms those of urban residents. This is called a negative digital divide.
 - i. June 2024 is when this negative digital divide was first documented. We have maintained this while continuing to close the digital divide across the state.
 - m. Hyperlinks are included in slides with research and stories on our work in SC.
 - n. Global perspective: (Private investment)
 - i. Google paid for a subsea cable that goes from Myrtle Beach State Park to Argentina
 - ii. Meta built a subsea cable going from Myrtle Beach to Spain.
 - iii. Google is building another cable to Portugal
 - iv. Another is going up and down the East coast
 - o. With the combination of our ISPs building the nooks and crannies of our state with global reach, it is an extraordinary time for SC.
 - p. SC has significant economic opportunity due to the extraordinary digital soil.
- V. Questions and Group Discussion: All Attendees
- a. Kudos to the BB Office for all the hard work done over the past few years.
 - b. Shout-out to Michael Borowski for his work on maps. We will share updates when they are completed.
 - c. Goal of June 4 is to get all final grant agreements in place for BEAD. We are within a couple of weeks of having this solved in SC.
 - d. What do y'all see as the future for this organization/council heading into BEAD? (John Frick)

- i. Once we know what happens with nondeployment, the BBAC would provide insight for the program. This would be used to inform the decisions made or amplify decisions made for us.
 - ii. If guidance is not forthcoming or something happens to the funding, we are still obligated to hold the meeting to comply with the proviso. Then, meetings would likely look like today's.
 - e. Can you speak to the status of Digital Navigators? (Pamela Jones)
 - i. We can't comment until we receive guidance on non-deployment. Right now, the money the BB Office has is for deployment.
 - f. Thank you, partners, for what you do. There is so much work that the community invests in training individuals. We are incredibly grateful for that and recognize how important that work is to help people. Many of you are creating creative solutions on the affordability side. Thank you for that.
 - g. Are our elected officials asking about nondeployment funding? (Stephen Taylor)
 - i. We've been hearing about it for years now, and everyone has ideas about how it could be used. The GA will weigh in. It is an exciting time with huge potential for the state. Imagine what we can do with \$500 Million on top of what we've already done. However, this is all unknown and subject to federal regulations.
 - h. Has NTIA reached out to offer guidance on waivers? (Matt Taylor)
 - i. Yes. There is a requirement in the BEAD Program to follow BABA. With this amount of money being spent nationally, there is concern about origin and availability of products. We are working our way through that. ISPs must be careful to ensure BABA compliance. Last we heard, they are well stocked and ready for action.
 - ii. Our staff is here to help and serve. Any new information that comes out, we will be here to assist.
 - i. What strategy or plans exist regarding new AI Center of Excellence? (Paola Gutierrez)
 - i. Everything is on the table, however, there are currently no plans. We are awaiting guidance from NTIA to determine if this is something we would be able to partner with.
- VI. Other Business: All Attendees
- VII. Next Meeting: Cedric Keitt, SCBBO
 - a. Will be scheduled for next fiscal year. We will include any updates we receive, including how ARPA wrap up for this year.
- VIII. Adjourn: Cedric Keitt, SCBBO
 - a. Thank you to all partners for attending.

Please contact Tom Allen (tallen@ors.sc.gov) with questions.